

THE RESTORED VISION



By Melnaie Havnaer

To the angel of the church of Laodicea write: “The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation, “I know your works: you are neither cold or hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by the fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

Revelation 3:14-18

These strong words were addressed to the church at Laodicea, not to demoralize these believers, but to call them back to life. Here was a church that had begun to die the most dangerous kind of death – the death of the “lukewarm”, who are so comfortable they don’t even know they are dying.

How do you get back that flame? How do you restore fire to a church that has sunken into a lukewarm stupor?

Jesus says, Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by the fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

Gold refined by fire..... truth that begins to dawn on us when we feel the heat of God’s refining fire.

White garments to clothe you and keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen..... righteousness that comes from above never from within.

Salve to anoint your eyes that you may see..... vision which comes to those whose hearts are pure.

But for now, let’s just concentrate on our need for that eye salve.

***I counsel you to buy from me...salve to anoint your eyes
that you may see.***

i.e. "Get your vision back, because if you get your vision back that lukewarm stupor will go." Many of us can look back to a time when our vision of God was far more clear than it is now. At some point in our past, Jesus broke through the darkness of our unbelief and manifested himself to us.

We saw Him. And seeing Jesus we saw the Father.

We began to see the world around us with new eyes.

We saw the Kingdom at work in the midst of all the chaos.

We had a clear view of the road we were called to walk.

And as we walked in the light of that vision, having faith in God was easy. Being able to touch the world around us with God's grace and healing was our joy.

But somewhere down the road our spiritual eyesight began to fade. We woke up one morning and found that our vision of God had fallen under a cloud. And instead of crying to the Father, "Father, the vision you gave me is fading! Father, I can't live without that vision!"

No, instead of calling for help, we went on pretending that everything was normal.

We accepted our fading of this vision as a perfectly natural phenomenon.

And settled down to a dull preoccupation with...

things these eyes can see, and these hands can touch, and these mouths can eat, and drink.

Where there is no vision the people perish.

Proverbs 29:18

In Acts 26, Paul is standing before King Agrippa in chains. And although he is in chains giving an account of his life, Paul is the *only* free man in that magnificent royal meeting hall:

Thus I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining round me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles – to whom I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then at Jerusalem and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance.

Acts 26:12-20

Paul is describing to Agrippa the turning point of his life, which was a vision of Jesus. This vision of Jesus came to him as a gift. It was nothing that he earned or deserved. It just came.

But when that vision came to Paul, he did two things:

He acted on that vision immediately.

He went on into Damascus. After his sight came back to him three days later, he received the Spirit, and was baptized. He then immediately went to the synagogues and began proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah!

When they were about to kill him in Damascus, he escaped. Later in Jerusalem he again bore witness. Then in Antioch, and on into the Gentile world Paul continued to obey the heavenly vision.

The Lord Jesus revealed; Paul obeyed.

Paul disciplined himself to keep that vision bright through the rest of his life.

Years later Paul discloses to the Philippians how he continues to pursue the vision. *"that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death."*

He never allows the vision to fade.

And now the vision has come to us. We didn't earn it. We didn't deserve it. It just came.

BUT when that vision came, it was up to us to act on the vision.

As we acted...

As we responded, offering back our lives to him who had already given his for us,

As we began to worship Jesus, and thank him, and praise him, and confess his name to the Father, and to each other and to the world, and

As we began to go out into the world and practice his mercy, and show grace toward other people...

the vision became ever more clear.

The vision is not something on the outside – it's on the inside. It's a flame burning at our center.



The Fire of God by Melanie Havnauer

Driving us like a divine obsession.

Fitting us into a plan far bigger than we are.

Joining us to the Body of Christ.

Guiding us to take good news to the poor,
and deliverance to the captives,
and sight to the blind,
and release to the oppressed.

So why didn't the vision stay?

How come it's not as bright today as it once was in so many of our lives?

Paul's vision remained fresh. Years later Paul stands before King Agrippa wrapped in chains, but his vision of the Lord is brighter than it ever was...because Paul acted on that vision, not just in the first couple weeks or months, but consistently down through the years.

Once God gives us vision of his Son, it's up to us to act on that vision, not just for the first three weeks, but through the rest of our lives. And if the vision, at any point, starts to get dull, it's up to us to get it back.

I counsel you to buy from me... salve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

So how do we get that eye salve? How do we restore that blazing flame that once burned in our hearts?

The first thing we do is to *admit* that the vision is not what it once was.

It has grown dull.

It has become weak and vague.

It is eternally dangerous to go on stumbling through the darkness, pretending to have a vision that we don't have.

***For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and need nothing;
not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.***

Many of us have wasted years of our lives pretending to ourselves, to each other and yes, even to God that the flame of life that once blazed inside is still there, when in fact it is not. We know all the right words to speak.

We know what motions to go through...

... motions of praise and thanksgiving.

...motions of love and care.

But what do we do if the vision has lost its power in us?

When the words we speak are empty?

When the motions we go through are hollow?

When people come to us with desperate needs and we have nothing to give?

God, help us, to admit the truth when our vision has departed!

When the flame has turned to ash.

We can only move forward when we confess the truth to our Lord Jesus.

Once we have admitted that our vision has faded,

we can then ask God to restore the vision to our thirsting souls.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.

Psalms 51:12

Restore to me the vision I once had! Clear my eyes so I can see once again! Put salve on my eyes, Lord God! I've run out of bread. A friend has come to me on a journey and I have nothing to set before him. Open my eyes, Lord, so I can see what I'm doing and minister the Kingdom to this person.



The promise is that if we ask for vision we will get it.

For every one who asks receives and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it is opened...
provided we keep at it...

Keep asking.

Keep seeking.

Keep knocking.

The man who went to his friend at midnight did not get the bread at the first knock. He had to keep knocking, and knocking, and knocking until the dullness of his own soul, which had caused him to run out of bread in the first place, was overcome. Then the door opened for him.

And this is what we have to do. We have to keep at it until we prove to ourselves, and to the Lord, that we truly want to be restored.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew in me a right spirit. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit.

Psalm 51:10-12

Everyone who asks for restored vision receives it –
everyone.

But there's one more thing we have to do.

As the Spirit begins to fan the dying coals with us, we need to stir them up. The Spirit blows on the coals: we stir them with our obedience. God works his life into us; we work his life out with action.

The Lord imparts the power...and by that power we obey.

Stir up the vision.

Hence I remind you to stir up the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control. Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord...

2 Timothy 1:7-8

Stir up the gift by opening your mouth and bearing witness to what you have seen.

And I tell you, every one who confesses me before men, the Son of man will confess before the angels of God...

Luke 12:8

Is Jesus talking only about the end of the age when he will confess us before the angels? Or is he also talking about now? Just as surely as Jesus lives to make intercession for us according to the will of God, he also ever lives to confess us before the angels. I confess Jesus before men boldly: Jesus confesses me before the angels.

Suddenly my eyes open and I begin to see again.
My vision is coming back.

We have opted to be, what we piously call, "silent Christians." No wonder our vision has faded!

Our excuse is that there are so many phonies around. "You hear them testifying to Jesus, and bigotry is oozing out of their pores!" "In church their mouths are full of praise to God, but out in the rat-race they're deceitful, and hard, and mean." "Man, we don't want to be lumped in with those people! We're not going to talk all that pious talk like they do. No, we'll go through this world like Jesus did – doing good."

But remember that while Jesus did indeed go through the world doing good, he also opened his mouth and proclaimed the Kingdom. It was his words that shook that world. And got him in trouble with the religious folks.

True, the apostles went about doing good, but it was the words that came from their mouths that shook the face of this earth. And it was the words that came from their mouths that kept their vision bright.

Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then at Jerusalem and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance.

Restore unto me the joy of your salvation.

The vision will be restored, brighter than it ever was,

if we will admit that it needs to be restored,

if we will ask God to restore it, and ...

if we will stir up the gift we have been given by opening our mouths and speaking the truth God has already put in our hearts.

“Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control. Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord...”



Prayer:

Father, father our vision of you is dimming and we are stumbling in blindness. Without the vision of you burning within us, we are poor, wretched, pitiful, blind, and naked. Open our eyes to our own emptiness...to our self-delusions, pretending we have life that is burning within us, when in truth, it's nothing but ashes. We are not truly alive without you; we have nothing to give without you. Give us thirsty souls for you once again. Restore to us the vision we once had. Clear our eyes, put salve on them so we can burn with love for you and minister your Kingdom once again. Restore to us the joy, the pure joy of living in your salvation and sharing it with others. And Lord as you once again fan the flame within us to life, may we stir it up, feed it, by confessing your name loudly and boldly until we shake the world and our own lives with your beautiful truth.

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

